

IOWA OUTDOORS

Iowa Department of Natural Resources
www.state.ia.us/government/dnr/index.html

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DNR PLANS RENOVATION PROJECT AT LAKE ANITA

LEWIS – Lake Anita, once the jewel of southwest Iowa bluegill, crappie and bass fishing, has been overrun by yellow bass to the point that fishing activity has dropped and the fish population is out of balance.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is hosting a public meeting at 7 p.m., Feb. 25, at the Anita City Hall, to discuss its plans to renovate the lake.

“Lake Anita has been so severely impacted by yellow bass, that few anglers are fishing the lake and the fish population in Anita is out of balance to the point that little if any newly hatched bluegill, crappie or largemouth bass survive,” said Chris Larson, with

The yellow bass have reduced the bluegill population by 85 percent, the crappie population by 70 percent and the largemouth bass population by 60 percent. Larson said the data is showing an estimated yellow bass population of more than 1.5 million in the 182-acre lake. That breaks down to 8,000 fish per acre. All other panfish, combined, amount to 290 fish per acre. With the enormous number and current size of yellow bass now in the lake, predator stocking would be futile.

“We plan to lower the lake level at the end of the summer and apply a chemical to the water that will kill the fish. This may sound like a radical approach to some in the fishing community, but we must eliminate all the yellow bass so this problem does not happen again,” he said. “Unfortunately, there is no chemical available that can target one specie of fish, without impacting other species.”

Lake Anita had been one of the best fishing lakes in southwest Iowa for more than 30 years for bluegill, crappie and bass fishing. Yellow bass showed up in 1995, and have increased each year until finally completely taken over the fish population.

“There are fewer fishing trips to Lake Anita and that means less money is spent locally on things like gas, food, bait and other goods and service,” Larson said.

When the fishing is good, Lake Anita has an estimated \$750,000 annual economic impact to the area. From 1992 to 2002, fishing trips have decreased by 50 percent.

“After the lake is killed out in late August or early September, we will stock bluegill, largemouth bass, redear sunfish and channel catfish. We also plan to work on fish habitat and install shoreline protection while the lake is low,” he said. “The work will go through March, then the gate will be closed and the lake allowed to fill.”

The DNR plans to wait until April 2005 to stock crappies. After the fish are stocked, it usually takes 2 to 3 years before fish are big enough to attract large numbers of anglers.

For more information, contact Larson at 712-769-2587.

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WOOD DUCK BOXES

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Carefully, Jim Meier shuffled across the glassy ice. Tufts of grass poked through and provided better footing here and there. Below, he could see about a foot down to the muddy bottom of this half-filled marsh. A cold snap meant firm footing now, as Meier resumed his winter maintenance route on over 300 wood duck nesting boxes here on the Hawkeye Wildlife Area in Johnson County.

With a bucket of wood chips in one arm and a stepladder in the other, he would rather slide across the ice than slog through ice water and the mud beneath. Arriving now at the wooden box, mounted 5-feet above the ice on a steel pipe, he set his ladder and hoisted himself up. “This one’s a successful nest,” Meier pronounced. “What we want to see is some down and broken shells with membrane attached. That usually tells you it was a successful hatch. A lot of these boxes get used, but we really don’t count them as successful until we can see those half shells and membrane.”

With the Iowa River winding through the area, Department of Natural Resources workers have one of the longer strings of nest boxes here. Dozens more are scattered on other public land in their five-county district. The cold weather ritual, though, is

underway across Iowa. Wildlife workers and individual landowners are on their maintenance rounds; replacing worn out boxes and erecting new ones. The midwinter ice makes it easier to walk out to the vacant boxes. However, the work can't wait too long. The first wave of migrating wood ducks is only a few weeks away. Male wood ducks are often back by the first of March, scouting for nest sites.

Through most of the 20th Century, that was a growing exercise in futility. Unlike more traditional ground nesting ducks, wood ducks hatch their broods in tree cavities. However, lowland flooding and human development erased many of those nesting spots. Wood duck numbers shrank precipitously in Iowa. The colorful species was in danger of being extirpated here.

A surge in human-provided housing, though, has fueled the comeback. A better understanding of its need for lowland timber and establishment of thousands of wood duck boxes have helped 'woodies' become fairly common, though reclusive, inhabitants again. Their numbers have rebounded to the point where they are the second or third most common duck bagged by Iowa hunters; a testament to their comeback.

Meier can often tell whether a nest will be successful as he approaches. One over water is always a better bet—squirrel proof--than one attached to a tree or on dry land. Segments of slick PVC pipe below the box defeat the efforts of raccoons, snakes and other predators looking for an easy meal inside. He stresses that anyone going to the trouble of setting out wood duck boxes and maintaining them should include predator guards in their design. "We used to put the boxes up in trees," explains Meier. "We had more trouble with raccoons getting into them; even with aluminum wrapped around the trunk. The plastic pipe seems to keep them from crawling up to the boxes."

Successful nests on the Hawkeye Area run at 45 percent; a rate biologists consider fairly good. On our next box, though, Meier motioned me to climb the ladder. Inside, I could see a jumble of twigs and grass, atop three or four unhatched wood duck eggs. "We are finding more starling nests in the boxes. A lot of times, they break the eggs or just build their nest right over the top of them. That's something showing up more and more every year," laments Meier. In another box, he finds evidence of a successful wood duck hatch, yet with a starling nest on top of the fragments. He is still looking for a solution.

By dumping last year's contents and refilling boxes with fresh wood chips, though, Meier is providing an early edge for the wood duck. With predator guards and good location, that's about all the human touch can provide. It's up to Nature to do the rest.

Wood Duck Box Giveaway Slated for February 15

The Hawkeye Area Waterfowlers will distribute free wood duck nest boxes and goose nesting structures, Feb. 15, at Indian Creek Nature Center in Cedar Rapids.

Chapter members build the nest boxes, which are distributed to the public each year. The giveaway begins at 9 a.m., in the Nature Center parking lot along Otis Road SE. Members will be on hand with advice on placing the nest structures. For more information, contact Jim Beyers, (319) 377-1402.

The giveaway is timed get out the structures set out on ponds and wetlands, ahead of the return of wood ducks; among the first species to migrate back north, late each winter.

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NATURAL RESOURCE COMMISSION TO MEET FEBRUARY 13

TODDVILLE, Ia. – The Natural Resource Commission (NRC) of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources will meet at 8:30 a.m., Thursday, Feb. 13, at the Wickiup Hill Outdoor Learning Center, near Toddville. The meeting is open to the public and public participation scheduled for 10:30.

The commission and staff will meet at the Guest House Inn & Suites, 2215 Blairs Ferry Road NE, in Cedar Rapids at 1 p.m., Feb. 12 for a tour of the area.

Members of the NRC are Joan Schneider, Richard Garrels, Paul Christiansen, Carol Kramer, William Sullivan, Richard Francisco and Janice Marcantonio. The DNR Director is Jeff Vonk.

The following is the agenda for the February meeting.

- Approve Agenda
- Approve Minutes of December 12 and December 30 Meetings
- Rock Island Preserve and Threatened and Endangered Species
- Construction Projects
- Land Acquisition
 - Waterman Creek Prairie, O'Brien County – Iowa Nature Conservancy
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 - Fallow Marsh Wildlife Management Area, Palo Alto County – Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation
 - Banner Mine Wildlife Management Area, Warren County – Rieck
 - Riverton Wildlife Management Area, Fremont County – Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (Thompson)
 - Riverton Wildlife Management Area, Fremont County – Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (Jensen Corp)
 - Riverton Wildlife Management Area, Fremont County – Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (Dawson)
- Management Agreements

- Brayton Memorial Forest, Delaware County
- Final Rule – Chapters 20, 38, 46, 47, and 50, Titling and Registration of Boats, Snowmobiles and ATVs
- Emergency Adopted – Chapter 12, Conservation Education
- Conservation and Recreation Donations
- George Wyth Concession Contract
- Final Rule – Chapter 61, State Parks and Recreation Areas
- Bluffland Protection, Revolving Loan Fund Projects
- Notice of Intended Action – Chapter 74, Forest Land Enhancement Program
- Residential Tree Planting Funds Donation by Alliant Energy
- Final Rule – Chapter 88, Fishing Tournaments
- Fish Habitat Promotion for County Conservation Boards Grant Review
- Wildlife Habitat with Local Entities Program Grant Review
- Notice of Intended Action – Chapter 52, Wildlife Refuges
- Notice of Intended Action – Chapter 91, Waterfowl and Coot Hunting Seasons
- Notice of Intended Action – Chapter 99, Wild Turkey Fall Hunting
- Final Rule – Chapter 94, Nonresident Deer Hunting
- Memorandum of Agreement Between Iowa, Nebraska and Fish and Wildlife Service
- Pheasant/Quail Restoration Program Contract Approval
- Notice of Intended Action – Chapter 106, Deer Hunting
- Final Rule – Chapter 104, Wildlife Importation, Transportation and Disease Monitoring
- Hunting Preserves
- Conservation Congress
- Final Rule – Chapter 7, Rules of Practice in Contested Cases
- Legislative Update
- General Discussion
- Items for Next Meeting, March 13, Des Moines

For more information, contact Karyn Stone at 515-281-8650.

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IOWA FISHING REPORT

For the week of February 18, 2003

www.state.ia.us/fish

For current information on fishing conditions for your lake or area, contact the office in that district. Phone numbers are listed with each district report. Ice fishing reports will be released every week while quality ice conditions exist.

Northeast

Mississippi River Pools 9 to 15: Anglers are catching some bluegills in **Lansing area in Big Lake** and in **Botsford Lake** in Pool 9. **Bussey Lake** in Pool 10 had some fish still being caught but many small bluegills. Sorting is required for larger fish. Anglers are catching some bluegills in the **Bertom/McCartney** area of Pool 11 (Wisconsin side). In Pool 12, **Fish Trap** and **Kehough** are fair for bluegills and crappie. At **Browns Lake** and Green Island, in Pool 13, fishing is good for bluegills and crappie. Pool 14, some bluegills and crappies are being caught in **Cattail Slough**. Fishing is fair for bluegills and crappies at **Schrickers** and good at **Rock Creek**. Fishing is good for bluegills and crappies at **Mallard Bay**. Anglers fishing Pools 12 – 14 have been mainly using wax worms and artificial lures.

Volga Lake (Fayette): Bluegills are fair mornings and evenings near deep brush piles.

For current information on trout fishing during the winter, call the **Manchester Trout Hatchery** at 563-927-5736, the **Big Spring Hatchery** at 563-245-1699 and the **Decorah Hatchery** at 563-382-3315.

For information on fishing in northeast Iowa, call the regional office in Manchester at 563-927-3276.

Northwest

Reminder: The walleye, muskellunge and northern pike seasons close on Feb. 15 on Spirit Lake, East and West Okoboji, in Dickinson County.

Spirit Lake (Dickinson): Yellow perch are fair using minnows, wax worms or wigglers on jigs ranging from pilkees to teardrops. Fishing has been good on the south side of the lake and Buffalo Run. A few walleyes have been caught on the north side by Mini-Wakan, but the action is slow.

West Okoboji (Dickinson): Walleye fishing is slow, but some fish are being caught in Miller's Bay. Minnows seem to be the bait of choice. Crappies are slow, but some are being caught in Miller's and Smith's bays. Bluegills are excellent in Smith's Bay, the north end of the lake, and recently in Miller's Bay. Use teardrops with a wiggler or wax worm. Northern pike fishing is great. Use chubs in Miller's and Smith's bays and in the north end of the lake. Yellow perch are slow. Some perch are being caught Smith's Bay on teardrops tipped with a wiggler or wax worm. Anglers are also catching some perch in Miller's Bay.

Center Lake (Dickinson): Anglers are urged to use extreme caution when fishing Center Lake. Extensive open water and thin ice conditions exist on the lake. Bluegill and crappie fishing is good in the southwest corner of the lake. Some walleyes are being caught on the east side.

Silver Lake (Palo Alto): The sporadic yellow perch bite continues. The best bait is a minnow under a slip bobber.

Badger Lake (Webster): Crappies are good on live minnows especially in the morning. The crappies are generally 8 to 9-inches. Bluegills are good on teardrops tipped with a wax worm. The bluegills are 7-1/2 to 8-1/2 inches.

Brushy Creek (Webster): Walleye fishing is good in about 40 feet of water. Use a jigging spoon tipped with a minnow. The best action is late in the afternoon.

North Twin (Calhoun): Crappie fishing is fair to good using minnows.

Arrowhead Lake (Sac): Fishing is good for 7 to 8-1/2 inch bluegills on teardrops and wax worms.

Black Hawk Lake (Sac): Bluegill and catfish fishing is fair to good, fishing off the rock piles and Ice House Point using teardrops tipped with wax worms. A few walleye are being caught in the evening hours. Anglers need to use caution, there is open water on the north side of the lake and in the Dennison Beach area.

Oldham Lake (Monona): Fishing is good for 7 to 8-inch bluegills.

Badger Lake (Webster): Fishing is good for 8 to 9-inch crappies using minnows. Bluegills are good on teardrops tipped with wax worms. The bluegills are 7-1/2 to 8-1/2 inches.

Clear Lake (Cerro Gordo): Walleye fishing is fair. The best activity is from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. Anglers using minnows under tip ups and jigging spoons are catching fish. Yellow bass are being caught around the island on jigging spoons tipped with cut bait or minnows. The bite has been spotty and inconsistent. Most of the yellow bass are being caught just before sunset.

Indian Lake, Eldred Sherwood Park (Hancock): Bluegill fishing is good. Some sorting is required, but 7 to 8-inch fish are available. Use a small ice jig tipped with a wax worm.

For more information on fishing in northwest Iowa, call the regional office in Spirit Lake at 712-336-1840.

Southwest

Lake Ahquabi (Warren): Bluegill fishing is slow to fair using wax worms and minnows. There was open water two weeks ago in the middle of the lake that has recently frozen so ice conditions vary greatly across the lake.

Big Creek Lake (Polk): Bluegill fishing has been spotty in the main lake, with some fish being caught in the "Lost Lake" area, using small tear-drops, kastmasters baited with wax worms. Crappies are fair using minnows on bare hooks with split shot. Reports indicate fish are deep and most fish taken around daybreak and after dark. Walleyes are good using kastmasters and small jigging spoons. Most walleye are below the legal length limit, with some reported up to 4 pounds.

Don Williams (Boone): Crappie fishing is fair with most anglers using wax worms and minnows. Some largemouth bass have also been reported, although most are below the minimum length.

Hooper Lake (Warren): Some bluegills have been caught, although generally fishing activity has been slow due to ice and weather conditions.

Rock Creek (Jasper): Crappie fishing has been slow using wax worms and minnows. Ice conditions have been spotty over the past few weeks, particularly near the dam area.

Easter Lake (Polk): Crappies are fair on wax worms. A few largemouth bass have been taken along the face of the dam.

Hickory Grove Lake (Story): Crappies and bluegills are fair using wax worms and jigs.

Orient (Adair): Fishing is good for crappies, up to 12 inches, using minnows in front of the dam.

Greenfield (Adair): Fishing is excellent for bluegill on jigs tipped with wax worms around structure in 10 to 20 feet of water. Ice thickness varies from 8 to 12 inches.

Viking (Montgomery): Bluegill and crappies are good on teardrops tipped with wax worms and minnows. Fishing is best in early morning hours and before sunset.

Manawa (Pottawattamie): Anglers are catching bluegill near tin can dike using a teardrop tipped with wax worms.

Willow (Harrison): Bluegills are good on wax worms.

Three Mile (Union): Ice thickness varies from 6 to 10 inches, with some open water areas that the waterfowl are keeping open, so be careful. Fishing is good for bluegill on wax worms, early morning and evening hours, in flooded timber near roadbeds. Crappie and walleyes, with a few larger ones, are being caught on minnows at brush piles at lower end of lake.

Twelve Mile (Union): Ice thickness varies from 6 to 10 inches with some open water areas, so be careful. Fishing is good for walleyes, bluegill, crappie, and small yellow bass on minnows and wax worms in early morning and evening hours in flooded timber or areas northeast of the west dock.

Fogle (Ringgold): Fishing is excellent for numerous 6 to 8-inch bluegills, and for channel catfish and crappies on wax worms in flooded timber and brush piles.

Icaria (Adams): Channel catfish and largemouth bass are good on wax worms and minnows.

Green Valley (Union): Fishing is fair for crappie and bluegill in east arm of the lake and good for catfish.

Badger Creek (Madison): Fishing is generally slow. The best action for bluegills and crappies is in the morning and evening.

West Lake Osceola (Clarke): Bluegill and crappie are fair. The best action is in the morning and evening hours.

Little River (Decatur): Bluegill, crappie and walleye are good in flooded timber areas near creek channel.

Slip Bluff (Decatur): Fishing is good for bluegills and crappies beside flooded trees.

Farm Ponds: Ice fishing is good for bluegill on wax worms. Ice thickness varies from 5 to 10 inches.

For more information on fishing in southwest Iowa, call the regional office in Lewis at 712-769-2587.

Southeast

Mississippi River Pools 16 19: Backwater areas of the Mississippi on Pools 16 to 19 continue to have solid ice conditions. Anglers should use caution in deepwater areas of **Big Timber** in Pool 17 or any place water current may exist. Fishing for bluegills is slow to good on **Big Timber** and **Hidden Acres** on Pool 17. Fishing for crappie and bluegills is slow to fair in **Bell s Pocket** in Pool 18.

Lake Odessa (Louisa): Bluegills and crappies are still being caught along the trees in Sand Run. Fish just off the treetops for the best luck. The late ice up means there is still good oxygen at the bottom so the deeper water still holds most of the fish.

Lake Geode (Henry): Lots of good ice but not much angling pressure. The fish were being caught off the steep ledges along the east shoreline. Clear water should make sight fishing along the habitat fairly easy.

Lake Rathbun (Appanoose): Crappies have been biting on small tube jigs and jigs tipped with minnows. Areas in South Fork and Honey Creek Bay have been the most productive. Most fish are being caught around or in submerged structure.

Lake Wapello (Davis): Bluegills and crappies have been hitting on small jigs tipped with a wax worm. The most productive areas have been in places with submerged structure.

Lake Keomah (Mahaska): Bluegills and crappies have been hitting on small jigs tipped with wax worms. Use caution because there is still some open water in areas the geese have been using.

Lake Sugema (Van Buren): Crappies and bluegills have been biting on small jigs tipped with wax worms. Evenings have been the best time to fish.

Lake Macbride (Johnson): Crappie fishing continues to be fair near the power lines and throughout the lake on jigs tipped with wax worms and minnows. Some sorting is required for sizeable fish. An occasional walleye is also being caught.

Diamond Lake (Poweshiek): Fishing continues to be fair in the evenings from 4:30 p.m. until dark for crappie and bluegills on jigs tipped with wax worms. Anglers are reminded that minnow usage is prohibited in this lake.

Pleasant Creek (Linn): Anglers have been catching a few crappie and bluegills on the west end of the lake and near the dam.

Coralville Reservoir (Johnson): Crappie fishing continues to be fair throughout the reservoir near brush and deeper holes on jigs tipped with wax worms and minnows.

For more information on fishing in southeast Iowa, call the regional office in Brighton at 319-694-2430.

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